

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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SECDEF
DIA WASHDC
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CONFIDENTIAL DAMASCUS 4191

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN, MOPS, SY, LE
SUBJECT: EMERGING SYRIAN STANCE ON LEBANON

REF: A. DAMASCUS 3973; B. DAMASCUS 4066

1. PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD'S INTERVIEWS WITH AL-MUSTAQBAL AND AL-ANWAR (REFTELS) HAVE EXCITED LOCAL SPECULATION THAT PRESIDENT MAY BE PALLING SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON. AL-BAATH COLUMNIST DIRECTED OUR ATTENTION TO AL-ANWAR INTERVIEW RECENTLY BY NOTING THAT HE READ IT AS INDICATION SYRIA WILL BE WITHDRAWING ITS FORCES FROM LEBANON. ACCORDING TO HIM, AL-ASSAD HAS "FINALLY" DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS LED INTO A TRAP IN LEBANON BY ISRAEL AND THE U.S., AND IS CURRENTLY TRYING

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TO EXTRACT HIMSELF BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

2. AS FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR HIS THEORY, HE CITED COLUMN BY SENIOR COLUMNIST AMID AL-KHULI IN JUNE 30 AT AL-BAATH WHICH APPEALED FOR FORMATION OF LEBANESE ARMY TO SETTLE SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON, CALLED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF "REMAINING FIVE PERCENT" OF CAIRO ACCORDS, REAFFIRMED

SYRIA'S "STRATEGIC LINK" WITH PLO, AND CONCLUDED: "CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE AREA ARE EXPLOSIVE. THESE CONDITIONS DEMAND THAT THE SYRIAN ARMY SHOULD ONCE AGAIN RESUME ITS PRINCIPAL PAN-ARAB MISSION ALONG THE LINE OF CONFRONTATION WITH THE ZIONIST ENEMY." SOURCE ADDED THAT KHULI WAS NOT INITIATING A PROPOSAL ON HIS OWN, BUT RATHER REFLECTING OFFICIAL THINKING. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUERY, SOURCE SAID KHULI HAS LATELY BEEN RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM BOTH INFO MIN AHMAD AND FROM COMMANDER NAJI JAMIL.

3. IN JULY 4 FRONT-PAGE COLUMN, KHULI CLAIMED THAT SYRIA'S PRINCIPLED POSITION HAD INCITED SCHEMING AND PRESSURES "EVER SINCE DISENGAGEMENT TALKS OVER GOLAN, THROUGH PLOT OVER LEBANON AND THE IRAQI ROLE IN THAT MAJOR PLOT TO DIRECT ALL ITS HOSTILITY AGAINST SYRIA, A ROLE STILL CONTINUING IN TREACHEROUS FORMS, AND ENDING WITH THE CONTRIVED ECONOMIC EMBARRASSMENTS AGAINST SYRIA. THE LEBANESE EVENTS WERE A RETALIATION AGAINST SYRIA OVER THE DISENGAGEMENT AND OVER REJECTION OF THE THEN-PRESENTED AMERICAN SOLUTION. IT IS NO LONGER A SECRET THAT AMERICA AND ISRAEL WERE BEHIND THE LEBANESE WAR, IN ALLIANCE WITH SOME PARTIES WHOSE ROLE WAS ONLY EXPOSED LATER. THE ECONOMIC PRESSURES BEING PUT ON SYRIA NOW, AND INCREASING SYRIA'S ECONOMIC EMBARRASSMENTS, ARE BUT A NEW LINK IN THE CHAIN OF DESIGNS AGAINST SYRIA. ISN'T IT REMARKABLE THAT THIS NEW CAMPAIGN OF INCREASING SYRIA'S DIFFICULTIES AND OF THE FAILURE

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OF THE SYRIAN ECONOMIC POLICY SHOULD COINCIDE WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN SOUTH LEBANON AND THE NEW ALLIANCES THERE, AND WITH THE INTERNAL CAMPAIGN TO MAKE THE CITIZEN DESPAIR AND LOSE HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ECONOMY AND HIS ADMINISTRATION?" KHULI THEN NOTED THAT EXISTENCE OF ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WAS WIDESPREAD INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON, AND THAT SYRIA WAS NO EXCEPTION TO THIS TREND. HE ADMITTED THAT DIFFICULTIES PARTLY CAUSED IN SYRIA BY "ECONOMIC INEFFICIENCIES, PRODUCTION PLANNING, RAMPANT CORRUPTION, LAXITY AND NEGLIGENCE." BUT MAJORITY OF CAUSES, IN HIS VIEW, DUE TO "EXTERNAL FACTORS GENERATED BY OUTSIDE PRESSURES." HE CONCLUDED BY STRESSING SYRIA'S "IRREVOCABLE" COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM.

4. COMMENT:

JUST AS PRESIDENT AL-SSAD LINKED SYRIAN DEFENSE WITH NEED FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON IN REF A, MEDIA IS LINKING SYRIA'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES TO PRESSURES GENERATED BY THOSE WHO OPPOSE SYRIAN AIMS IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE NEW THEME SEEMS TO BE THAT THERE ARE GROWING PRESSURES, BOTH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC, ON SYRIA TO REDUCE ITS MILITARY FORCE IN LEBANON. IT IS THEREFORE MORE URGENT THAN EVER FOR LEBANESE

LEADERS TO GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION
AND REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY; THE TIME WHEN SYRIA'S
DETERRENT FORCE WILL BE ABLE TO SHOULDER THE BURDEN OF MAIN-
TAINING ORDER IN LEBANON IS RAPIDLY GROWING SHORTER.

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